Pacific Islands Fishery News

Newsletter of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Summer 2001

The albacore jig fishing vessel *Kami M.* in Honolulu being outfitted to longline in American Samoa. The number of federal permits for large American Samoa-based longline vessels has leapt to 22 this past year.

New Boats, New Rules Worry Territories, Commonwealth

A rapid increase in the number of large longline vessels in American Samoa and implementation of new pelagic fishing restrictions in the US Pacific islands have local fishermen and fishery managers concerned. At issue is the potential damage to the local fisheries in American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Of equal concern is an apparent disregard of local needs and conditions as management measures are disapproved, delayed or developed on the continental United States and dictated to island areas thousands of miles away.

Alias at Risk in American Samoa

Last year, there were three longline vessels larger than 50 feet length operating in American Samoa. Today, the number of large longline vessels operating in American Samoa has increased to a dozen, and it is anticipated to rise to 20 by the end of the year. Already, the number of large boats federally permitted to do so has reached 22. While some call the situation "critical," Ray Tulafono, director of America Samoa's Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), is less alarmed but said it is "difficult."

"We would like to have seen a gradual increase instead of a drastic one," he explained.

Traditionally, the typical longline vessel in American Samoa has been a 30-foot, open-decked catamaran, known as an *alia*. Powered by gasoline outboard and equipped with a hand-crank reel, it is limited to eight-hour fishing trips and sets an average of 188 hooks per day on up to 10 miles of

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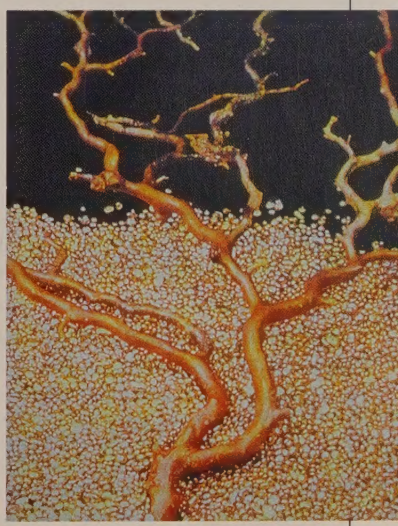
Council Approves NW Hawaiian Islands Precious Coral Reserve

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council agreed on June 21, 2001, in Honolulu to the establishment of an extensive reserve for deep-water precious corals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). The mega-refugia would run approximately 250 miles from the existing Wespac Refugia to the southeastern edge of Brooks Bank and to a depth of 750 fathoms (i.e., 4,500 foot). Within it, the harvesting of pink, red and gold precious coral would be banned.

Additionally, harvesting gold coral would be banned



Deep-water precious corals are found at depths of 1,000 to 4,500 feet (175 to 750 fathoms). Unlike reef-forming corals, which are found at 0 to 300 feet (0 to 50 fathoms), deep-water corals do not depend on sunlight.

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New Boats, New Rules *continued from page 1*

monofilament line. Local residents and those of neighboring Samoa make up the average three-man crew, targeting albacore for the cannery in Pago Pago. Today there are about 25 *alias* actively longlining in American Samoa and another 23 have federal permits to do so.

Entry into this typically small-boat fishery by large vessels this past year is a result of several factors. About six or seven of the large vessels are partnerships between fishermen and American Samoa businessmen who invested in the operations after seeing they were profitable, Tulafono said. Local fishermen own three other of the large vessels.

"Nowadays they realize the alia is not the type of vessel that can compete in this fishery," he noted.

Additional vessels entering into the fishery come from two off-island fleets.

The recent lawsuit by environmentalists concerned about interactions between turtles and the Hawaii longline fleet resulted in new regulations developed by NMFS that made Hawaii less attractive, explained Jim Cook, co-owner of the fishing supply company Pacific Ocean Producers in Honolulu. Those regulations ban US Pacific island longline vessels from using shallow-set gear anywhere in the North Pacific and any longline gear April 1 to May 31 in a 1.9 million square mile area located between the equator and 15 degrees North latitude. Consequently, more than 30 longline vessels left Hawaii, the majority headed for California.

"Boats went bankrupt, and three or four went to American Samoa," Cook said.

Additionally, West Coast albacore fishermen who traditionally jigged during the winter out of American Samoa and spent summers in the North Pacific either jigging for albacore or fishing for swordfish, realized they could stay in American Samoa during the summer and longline for albacore.

"We have equipped six boats to do that," Cook noted.

The future of the local alia given the influx of large longline vessels in American Samoa depends on the price of albacore (now at $2,200/ton in Pago Pago) and the outcome of two proposed management measures.

American Samoa is looking at limited entry as a way of controlling the number of larger vessels entering the fishery, with hopes local fishermen will be able to continue fishing despite the new competition, Tulafono said. The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council in June of this year directed staff to develop a Pelagics Fishery Management Plan amendment to implement such a program.

The Council is also urging NMFS to expedite implementation of an area closure out to 50 miles from shore for pelagic fishing vessels larger than 50 feet. The Council initially recommended the large-boat area closure in 1998, to include federal waters out to 30 miles from Swains Island and out to 50 miles around the rest of American Samoa. In 1999, NMFS disapproved the closure as an unwarranted measure. The Council resubmitted the measure last year, asking for an area closure out to 50 miles throughout American Samoa, even though many local fishermen had requested a 100-mile closure.

Lost Opportunities in CNMI

At the other end of the spectrum, the domestic fishery in the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands (CNMI) is in a lull, and the new regulations for US Pacific island pelagic fisheries as a result of the Hawaii longline lawsuit are viewed as exacerbating the situation.

"The new restrictions being developed are burdening us even in our development stage," noted Richard Semans, director, Division of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "Investors may come here to think about fishing, but the anticipated restrictions discourage them before they explore the possibility," he explained.

Among those restrictions are the allowable takes of turtle provided for in the biological opinion issued by NMFS on March 29, 2001. CNMI, Guam and American Samoa are each allowed one leatherback and three hard-shell turtle takes, while Hawaii is allowed 26 leatherback and 86 hard-shell turtle takes. Seman argued against those allowances, noting that the measures are based on a one-size-fits-all management approach rather than site-specific data.

Seman and others are particularly concerned about the lost investment opportunities because the commonwealth's gross domestic product could potentially be halved in 2005.

"CNMI is expecting its garment factories to close down in four years when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) textile provisions kick in," Seman explained. That industry accounts for about $120 million of CNMI's $250 million revenue. The local government is hoping fishing could make up for the anticipated losses.

Currently, the CNMI domestic fishery consists of about 20 to 30 full-time fishing vessels, engaged in mostly bottomfish and surface trolling and averaging about 16 to 22 feet in length. CNMI would like to see the fishery develop into one comparable to Hawaii, with larger vessels capable of a larger range and more time at sea, Semans said.

Additionally, CNMI is hoping that fishing agreements can be made to allow foreign countries to fish in the exclusive eco-

Interest in developing CNMI's fisheries brought Congressman Dino M. Jones, CNMI House of Representatives, to the June 2001 Council meeting in Honolulu. He is flanked by Richard Semans (left), director, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife Resources, and CNMI Council member Benny Pangelinan.

nomic zone (EEZ) around the commonwealth for a fee. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, such agreements can be made for the EEZs around CNMI, Guam, American Samoa and the US Pacific island possessions. However, before any Pacific Insular Area fishery agreement (PIAFA) can occur, a Marine Conservation Plan (MCP) for the island area has to be developed. An MCP for CNMI was completed and submitted in 1998 to NMFS, where it and the MCPs for the other US Pacific island areas have languished.

Despite these setbacks, CNMI remains hopeful. Vertical longline experiments conducted by the Secretariat for the Pacific Community in CNMI April to June of this year were surprisingly favorable. During trial runs setting 25 longline hooks, on two occasions eight yellowfin tuna weighing 30 or more pounds were landed around fish aggregation devices (FADs) and deployment of gear without FADs landed seven fish and eight fish, with a 30-lb average weight.

Semans said fishermen who participated in the training are positive, but the fisheries capabilities for CNMI need to be more fully understood or discovered. Ironically, monies generated from a PIAFA would have provided such needed research.

Guam Fishers Stymied

When the draft biological opinion for the Pacific island pelagic fisheries came out in March, Manuel Duenas said he felt the American dream had been taken from him. The ban on shallow-set longline gear by US Pacific island vessels in the North Pacific stopped the outfitting of what would have been Guam's first three domestic longline vessels. Duenas, president of the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association, was particularly upset that there is no data from Guam waters to support the ban.

To add insult to injury, hundreds of foreign vessels porting in Guam to re-provision and unload their catch (which is allowed under the Nicholson Act) can continue using the gear.

They also continue to fin sharks—an activity that US vessels can no longer engage in following a national ban last year. The foreign vessels can store the fins onboard until they offload in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), which they are required to do once per quarter, Duenas said.

"All these regulations are coming in and scaring the local fishermen," Duenas added, noting that there is an overabundance of sharks in Guam waters. "Of every three fish we catch, we lose one to a shark." Yet, with an average boat size of 20 feet, the fishermen can not afford to bring the shark in whole and so lose any commercial value they could have gained from the fins.

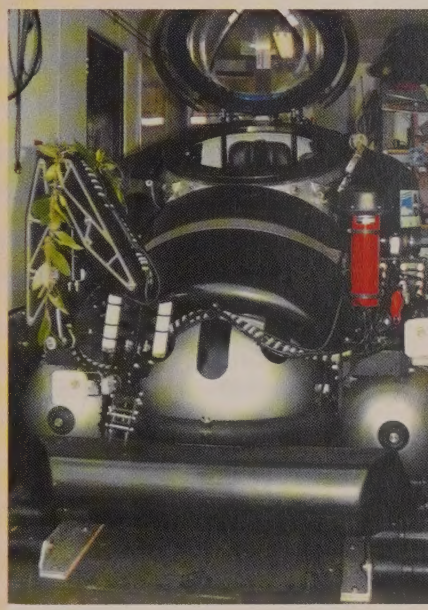
Duenas hopes that Guam will be able to develop its local fishery into 40- to 65-foot vessels that can venture to currently inaccessible grounds and, perhaps, ultimately replace the foreign vessels. He is frustrated by figures that show that 97 percent of the Western Pacific fish are caught by major fishing countries and only 3 percent by Pacific islanders.

A domestic fishery with large vessels would generate much needed employment on the island, which currently has a 13 to 15 percent unemployment rate, and would bring revenues to the local government, which is anticipating a $100 million deficit this coming fiscal year, he added.

The Western Pacific Council's Community Development Program and Community Demonstration Projects Program could support experiments to see what type of longlining can be done, Duenas noted. While these programs—established to facilitate participation by eligible indigenous communities in US Pacific island fisheries—have taken years to make their way through the NMFS bureaucracy, it is hoped they will be available to the islands in late 2001.

Project Deep Reef to Study Hawaiian Islands

Designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) as a Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve by President Clinton in December 2000 was based on the assumption that coral reefs in the Hawaiian archipelago extend from 0 to 600 feet in depth. However, the real depth range of coral reefs in the island chain is not well known and, in many cases, may reach only 100 feet. To ascertain the actual lower limit of coral reef growth and describe its adjacent shelf habitat, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, University of Hawaii, National Marine Fisheries Service and American Deepwater Engineering have jointly initiated Project Deep Reef—a study of the deep reef ecosystems and benthic fishery resources in the archipelago.



The DeepWorker—a one-person, tetherless submersible capable of working in depths down to 2,000 feet and providing a 180° field of vision—will be used to study coral reefs and determine the impacts of fisheries on them in the Hawaiian archipelago.

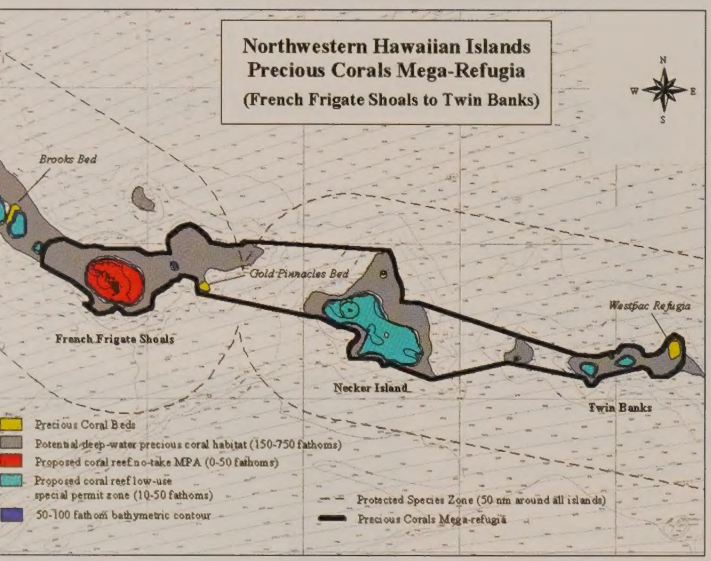
A second major objective of the project will be to determine specific impacts of the lobster, bottomfish and precious coral fisheries on the coral reef ecosystems both in the NWHI and main Hawaiian Islands. Stations have been selected off Maui, Niihau, Nihoa and Necker Islands in order to investigate specific questions associated with each fishery.

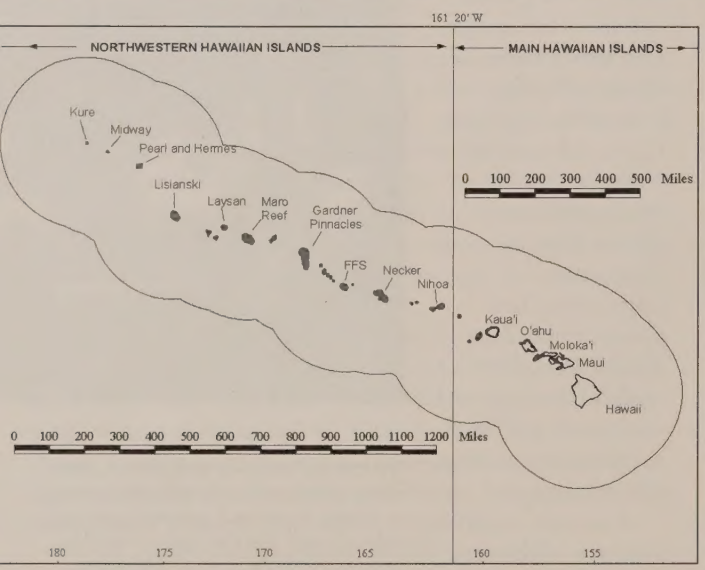
Precious Coral Reserve *continued from page 1*

throughout the entire NWHI and harvesting pink and red coral would be limited to 5 percent of the stock.

These and other conservation measures adopted by the Council address concerns about the potential use of gold coral beds by endangered monk seals and would ensure NWHI pink and red coral are protected, while allowing for sustainable use.

The deepwater corals are used to produce fine jewelry and have a potential annual economic value to the state of Hawaii of about $25 million.





Council Adopts Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council finalized the Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan (FMP) when it met June 18–21, 2001, in Honolulu. The plan establishes conservation measures to protect coral reef resources in federal waters (generally, 3 to 200 miles from shore) surrounding Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and other U.S. Pacific islands. It will be forwarded in the coming weeks to the Secretary of Commerce for approval.

Among the conservation measures within the plan is the establishment of a network of marine protected areas (MPAs), which are zoned as no-take or low-use.

All fishing—whether for commercial, recreational, subsistence or cultural purposes and whether for coral reef resources or other species managed under any FMP—would be prohibited within the no-take zones. About 70 percent of the no-take areas are in the NWHI. These include federal waters 0 to 10 fathoms (0 to 60 feet) throughout the 1,200-mile chain and federal waters 0 to 50 fathoms (0 to 300 feet) surrounding Laysan, French Frigate Shoals and the northern half of Midway Atoll. Other no-take zones include waters 0 to 50 fathoms (0 to 300 feet) around Jarvis Island, Howland Island, Baker Island, Kingman Reef and Rose Atoll.

The low-use zones require a special permit to harvest coral reef resources not already covered by an existing FMP. They include federal waters 10 to 50 fathoms (60 to 300 feet) throughout the NWHI unless designated a no-take zone and 0 to 50 fathoms (0 to 300 feet) surrounding Johnston, Wake and Palmyra Atolls and the southern half of Midway.

Also, Guam's southern banks are designated as an MPA within which anchoring by fishing vessels larger than 50 feet is prohibited.

The Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP establishes permit and reporting requirements and bans the take of wild live rock and live hard corals (except for seed stock for aquaculture of live coral and for indigenous use).

It establishes fishing gear restrictions that prohibit the use of trawl nets, gill nets, poisons, explosives and intoxicating substances; bans spearfishing with scuba gear at night in the NWHI and remote U.S. Pacific islands; and limits the use of traps to appropriate areas and conditions.

Additionally, it requires all fishing vessels operating in or transiting through MPAs to carry insurance to cover the cost of vessel removal and pollution cleanup in the event of a grounding and establishes a process to rapidly adjust the fishery management measures as needed. Potential future adjustments identified in the plan include the establishment of mooring buoys and anchoring areas in MPAs, vessel monitoring requirements and additional permit requirements, among others.

The plan also includes measures to establish a formal process to ensure that bottomfish, crustacean and precious coral fisheries operating under existing FMPs do not negatively impact the coral reef ecosystem. It facilitates consistency among state, territorial and federal management of coral reef resources and fosters public education of coral reef management issues.

Hawaii Sees Increase in Stranded Turtles

The green sea turtle (honu) is found in the protected shallow, coastal waters of Hawaii. Since its listing as a threatened species in 1978 under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the population has increased both in the nesting areas in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and the foraging areas around the main Hawaiian islands. There has also been an increase in the number of stranded turtles, i.e., individuals washed up on shore dead or alive but in need of medical attention. Several reasons for the strandings have been identified, including fibropapilloma (FP) and interactions with recreational fishing gear.

FP is an often fatal, tumor-forming disease that can lead to disruptions in breathing, feeding, seeing or swimming. Between 39 and 69 percent of the stranded turtles in Hawaii have been found to carry the disease. The only spot in Hawaii where no known cases of FP have occurred is the western coastline of the Big Island. Tumors are the most prevalent in turtles living off the coastline of Maui. However, most of the stranded turtles are reported on Oahu, where the majority of the human population resides.

"Tumors exacerbate the entanglement in netting or fishing line," says George Balazs, head of the Marine Turtle Research Program at the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Honolulu Laboratory. "Warty protruding growths offer more for line and net to snag and entangle on."

Live sea turtle severely injured by fishing line at Kapoho, Hawaii. This turtle was rescued and treated by NMFS biologists and University of Hawaii at Hilo student assistants. Simple precautions by shoreline fishermen can reduce entanglement and suffering. (G. Balazs photo)

"Entanglement and flipper death from monofilament fishing line, and even ingestion of line, all from active shoreline fishing are issues of increasing concern in the Hawaiian islands," Balazs notes. "Simply stated, there are more coastal recreational fishermen and more turtle interactions."

Last year, 51 turtles were found stranded with evidence of coastal gear, including lines, hooks and netting. That is nearly double the amount found stranded with evidence of coastal gear six years earlier, i.e., 27 turtles in 1994.

A serious aspect of green sea turtle interactions with coastal fishing gear is entanglement in monofilament line. Lines wrapped around a turtle's flipper restrict movement and often sever the limb or require amputation by veterinarians.

Coastal fishing gear interactions monitored by the Honolulu Laboratory Marine Turtle Research Program

Year	Total Number of Strandings	Number (Percent) of Turtles with Evidence of Fishing Gear*
1994	213	27 (13%)
1995	195	29 (15%)
1996	252	35 (14%)
1997	239	46 (19%)
1998	284	37 (13%)
1999	293	46 (16%)
2000	274	51 (18%)
Total	1,750	271 (15%)

*Evidence of line, hook or net interaction does not mean the gear killed the turtle.

"Sea turtles with a single front flipper get along pretty well," Balazs says. "But certainly they get along better with two front flippers." Males with only a single front flipper are unable to mate, he notes.

Both the State of Hawaii and federal agencies are responsible for monitoring and taking action to protect these species within the nearshore areas. The NMFS Office of Law Enforcement notes that it is against the law for people to "take" green sea turtles. The term "take" is broadly interpreted in the ESA, meaning to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect or to attempt to engage in any such conduct." Therefore, not only fishermen with nets and poles should take note but also divers and snorkelers.

Although green sea turtles are generally vegetarian and feed primarily on seaweed (limu), they can be attracted to materials used for bait, such as squid or shrimp. To reduce the impacts of coastal fisheries on turtles, scientists have recommended the following:

- Do not cast in an area where turtles can be seen repeatedly surfacing to breathe, as this signals they are feeding.
- If a turtle is caught, cut the fish line as close as possible to the hook (within an inch or two) and remove any other pieces of line that may entangle the turtle.
- Do not attempt to remove a hook from a turtle unless it is lightly embedded and can be taken out with no added injury.
- Turtles that are entangled with deeply cutting line or embedded with a hook piercing deep into their body need to be treated by a veterinarian. Keep the turtle in the shade and call the NMFS Marine Turtle Research Program at 983-5730 or, on weekends and holidays, call the State of Hawaii conservation hotline at 587-0077.

For suspected law enforcement violations, call NMFS Law Enforcement at (808) 541-2727 or (800) 853-1964.

Biological Opinion Brings on Lawsuit Flurry

Following the March 29, 2001, biological opinion (BO) on the pelagic fisheries of the Western Pacific Region, three lawsuits and two notices of intent to sue were filed separately by unsatisfied environmentalists and fishermen against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS):

April 11— Hawaii Longline Association, plaintiff: Seeks review of the BO. Claims it is deeply flawed as a matter of process, science and law, resulting in measures that increase the risk of extinction of sea turtles by supplanting the highly regulated Hawaii-based fishery with unregulated foreign fisheries known to cause up to nearly 1,000 times more sea turtle mortalities and by eliminating the only current source of reliable scientific data regarding high seas fishery impact on sea turtles and the only viable fishery for innovating gear modifications and fishing strategies to significantly reduce sea turtle impacts. Also, alleges the BO attempts to obstruct the movement of vessels between states, e.g., Hawaii and California.

May 2—Center for Biological Diversity and Turtle Island Restoration Network, plaintiffs: Alleges NMFS failed to "consult" as required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on the effects of federally permitted longline fishing by vessels based in California. Claims that the injunction restricting Hawaii-based longline vessels from fishing throughout much of the North Pacific resulted in at least 40 longline boats originating in Hawaii unloading their catch in California ports, increasing the quantity of swordfish landed in San Pedro, Calif., from 1.5 million pounds in 1999 to 2.6 million pounds in 2000. Alleges that the Hawaii longline fishery operating both within the US exclusive economic zone and the high seas is managed under the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Pelagic Fisheries in the Western Pacific Region. However, the same vessels landing in California are not subject to the FMP. Also, longline vessels based in California are not regulated under a federal FMP and do not take onboard observers.

May 22—Center for Marine Conservation and Turtle Island Restoration Network, plaintiffs: Seeks review of the BO. Claims it fails to adequately conserve sea turtles and did not "quantify the effect of [the Samoan longline] fishery on those species," nor the levels of take of the handline, troll and pole-and-line fisheries or "the substantial impacts of the shrimp fisheries operating along the Pacific coasts of Mexico, Central America and South America." Alleges the BO is "arbitrary, capricious and unlawful."

June 18— Hawaii Longline Association, 60-day notice of intent to sue the NMFS and US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for violations of the ESA: Notes that the March 2001 BO for the Hawaii longline fishery has substantially altered the fishery by eliminating the swordfish component. Hence, the November 2000 BO by the FWS on the effects of the fishery on short-tailed albatross "grossly overestimates the amount of incidental albatross take occurring in the longline fishery" and contains terms and conditions that "are now unnecessarily restrictive" and in need of revision.

June 18— Hawaii Longline Association, 60-day notice of intent to sue NMFS and State of Hawaii for violations of the ESA: Alleges that the State and recreational fishers do not fully comply with applicable environmental laws to protect turtle species listed under ESA.

New Control Date for Hawaii Offshore Handliners

A new "control date" of Feb. 15, 2001, has been announced for the offshore pelagic handline fishery around the Hawaiian Islands. It supercedes the old control date of July 2, 1992, and applies to Cross Seamount, four NOAA weather buoys and the University of Hawaii "Bigeye Buoy," all located approximately 160 miles offshore.

The new control date serves as a notice to fishermen informing them that those who do not have a history of handlining in these areas before the control date may be restricted in the future should the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council develop a regulatory amendment that would limit entry or effort. It was set due to concerns about potential fishing relocation to these areas as a result of measures contained in the March 29, 2001, biological opinion for pelagic fisheries of the Western Pacific Region, which resulted in gear restrictions and time-area closures for the Hawaii-based longline fishery. The revised control date for the handline fishery would not impact longliners unless they choose to switch to handline gear. However, the Council and many fishermen believed there is a risk of speculative entry into and expansion of the offshore handline fishery as well as a potential for increased gear interactions and competition should displaced longliners and/or other fishers relocate or enter into these small but productive fishing grounds.

A $2,000 sea anchor from a handline vessel tangles with shallow-set longline gear at Cross Seamount.

Several weeks following the issuance of the biological opinion, confrontations between longliners and handliners were reported at Cross Seamount.

Programs for Indigenous US Pacific Island Communities Make Headway

After three years and a difficult period of negotiation, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has agreed to the proposed eligibility criteria for the Western Pacific Community Development Program and Western Pacific Community Demonstration Project Program, which were developed by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council in 1998. The programs aim to enhance participation by communities of indigenous island residents in the fisheries under the jurisdiction of the Council. They are authorized by Congress in the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996, as a result of concerns that these communities have not been appropriately sharing in the benefits from the region's commercial fisheries.

To be eligible to participate in either program, a community must meet the following requirements:

- Be located in American Samoa, the Northern Marina Islands, Guam or Hawaii (Western Pacific Area);
- Consist of community residents descended from aboriginal people indigenous to the western Pacific area who conducted commercial or subsistence fishing using traditional fishing practices in the waters of the western Pacific;
- Consist of community residents who reside in their ancestral homeland;
- Have knowledge of customary practices relevant to fisheries of the western Pacific;
- Have a traditional dependence on fisheries of the western Pacific;
- Experience economic or other barriers that have prevented full participation in the western Pacific fisheries and, in recent years, have not had harvesting, processing or marketing capability sufficient to support substantial participation in fisheries in the area; and
- Develop and submit a Community Development Plan to the Council and NMFS.

The first step in the process of finalizing the eligibility criteria will be a request for public comment in the *Federal Register.*

Pacific Island Countries, Territories React to Hawaii Swordfish Closure

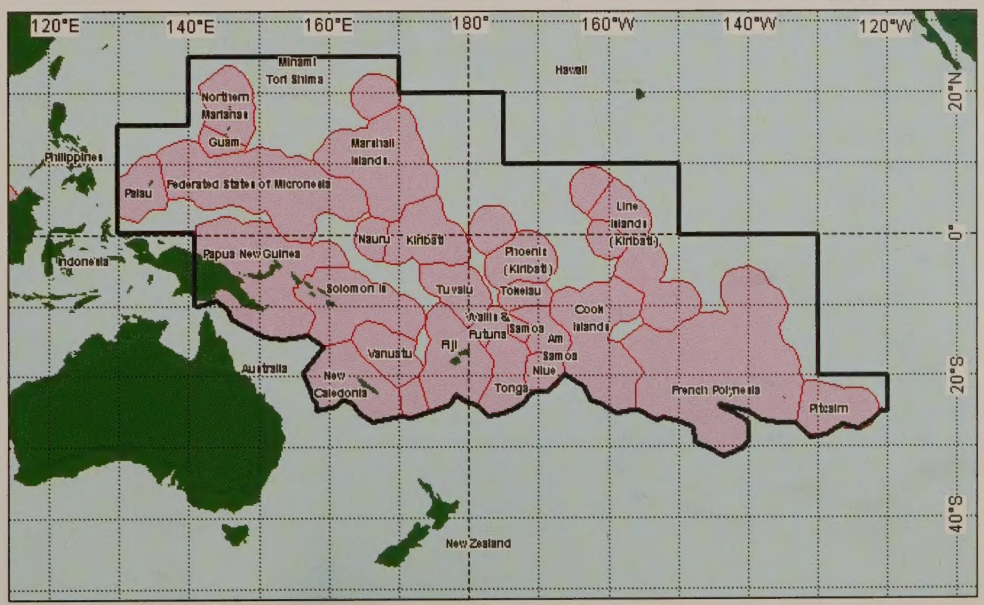
The issue of bycatch has become significant in the Pacific following the closure of the Hawaii swordfish longline fishery and other followup actions as a result of a court decision, according to a working paper for the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Heads of Fisheries meeting in New Caledonia, July 23–27, 2001. Environmental groups concerned about potential impacts of the longline fishery to marine turtles initiated the lawsuit.

"Unfortunately, the publicity given to the longline bycatch issue over the last few years has been characterized by a high degree of emotive commentary: by information that is often inaccurate and which often inappropriately assumes that occurrences in one area can be extrapolated to another area," the paper notes.

"It is likely that poorly informed and politically motivated external interventions by lobby groups will continue, and have the potential to impact the emerging fishing industries of the Pacific Island countries and territories," the paper concludes. Among the recommendations offered to the Heads of Fisheries are the following:

- Encourage accurate data collection from domestic longline operations, especially key target and bycatch species.
- Consider changing future access agreements with distant-water fishing nations (DWFNs), to include the need for reporting key bycatch species as a licensing condition.
- Work towards implementing national observer programs for domestic and DWFN vessels.

The working paper can be viewed in full on the Web at www.spc.int/coastfish/Reports/RTMF28/E-HOF2-WP5.pdf.



Western and central Pacific Ocean, showing the Pacific island countries' tuna fishery area where domestic fleets and those from Japan, Taiwan, Korea and other distant-water fishing nations set around 300 million hooks on pelagic longlines, with tuna as their primary target. While the catch of tuna by longlines in the area is only 10 percent of the total pelagic catch by volume, it is worth nearly as much as the much larger purse seine fishery in value.

COUNCIL CALENDAR

AUGUST

9–16 Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 14th Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish meeting, Noumea, New Caledonia

19–23 3rd International Billfish Symposium, Cairns, Australia

19–23 National American Fisheries Society meeting, Phoenix, Ariz.

27–30 Putting Fishers Knowledge to Work international conference, Vancouver, Canada

SEPTEMBER

5 North Pacific Albatross Working Group meeting, Honolulu

24 International West Coast Seafood Show, Los Angeles

18–21 Population Modeling Workshop, Council office, Honolulu

25–26 Administration for Native Americans, Training and Technical Assistance Contract workshop, Honolulu

OCTOBER

8–12 Forum Fisheries Agency's Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Scheme for the Western-Central Pacific workshop, Nadi, Fiji

9–11 78th Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting, Council conference room, Honolulu

21–24 Hawaii 4th Asia Pacific Marine Biotechnology Conference, Honolulu

22–23 Council Advisory Panel meeting, Honolulu

23–26 111th Council meeting, Hawaii Convention Center, Honolulu

30–Nov. 1 China Fisheries and Seafood Expo, Qingdao, China

NOVEMBER

1 American Fisheries Society Hawaii Chapter's Fisheries Symposium, Honolulu

TBA 6th US Coral Reef Task Force meeting, Washington, DC (tentative)

2–3 2nd Hawaii Aquatics Conference, Waianae, Oahu, Hawaii

5–8 Oceans 2001 conference, Honolulu

11 Honolulu Harbor Festival, Honolulu

15–17 Seattle Fish Expo and Workboat Northwest, Seattle

Western Pacific Recipe: Island-Style Fish Chowder*

Ingredients

1 to 1½ lb mahimahi
4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
2 to 3 onions, peeled and diced
black pepper to taste
juice of half a lemon
2 to 3 Tbs. soy sauce
1 hot pepper, minced (optional)
pinch of thyme
salt to taste
1 cup coconut milk
1 cup light cream or evaporated milk
corn starch, optional
green onions, minced

Cut fish into small cubes, removing all bones. Place fish in a pot and cook until medium well (approx. 5 minutes). Immediately remove from heat. Drain and save stock. Saute onions in pan, add water to cover potatoes and boil until tender. Drain part of the potato to water. Add fish stock (total liquid should be above all ingredients), fish cubes, spices, soy sauce and lemon. Cook at medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add milk and let come to a quick boil (optional add liquefield cornstarch to desired consistency or simmer to overcook the potatoes). Remove from heat. Add green onions. Serve with French bread, crackers or rice.

*courtesy of the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative

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French Polynesia to Expand Tuna Fleet

(Information from the Samoa News)

More than 150 tuna fishing vessels are expected to be operational in French Polynesia's exclusive economic zone in the next five years with an anticipated yearly catch of 35,000 tons, the daily newspaper *Les Nouvelles de Tahiti* reports.

To radically beef up its fishing capacity, the territory will build 56 new vessels measuring between 30 to 75 feet in length, said joint venture Tahiti Nui Rava'i general manager Pierre Teriitehau. According to the plan, 23 vessels would be built in 2001 and 2002 and the remaining 33 vessels between 2003 and 2005. The ultimate goal is to increase the yearly tuna catch volume by 15,000 tons. The number of fisheries-related available jobs (direct or indirect) is expected to increase threefold, Teriitehau said.

Tahiti Nui Rava'i was set up last September with capital of nearly $2 million, funded by the European Investment Bank, the French Development Agency and a private bank, Socredo. The vessels should also benefit from a tax exemption granted to structural and development investments in French overseas territories. French Polynesia President Gaston Flosse is a strong advocate of the project, which is part of the territory's economic conversion after French nuclear tests ended early in 1996.